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Fireheart and Mistyfoot

Fireheart lay down upon one of the smooth baking stones of sunning rocks and let the heat from the green-leaf sun sink into his fur, making it turn to flame. His mind emptied and he just thought about how good the sun felt. He was alone, on the rocks beside the slow flowing river. It was quite empty this far into green leaf so the stepping-stones were way above the water line.

On the other side of the bank, a cat was making her way down to the river to fish. Mistyfoot pushed past the hundreds of stiff reeds and slipped out into a small clearing beside the river. She liked to hunt here often because she could see sunning rocks and her other surroundings were not blocked by huge green reeds. As she walked up to the bank, she caught a glimpse of orange from the corner of her eye. *Is there a fire?* She turned her head as quick as an adder and looked towards sunning rocks. She relaxed as she saw it was just a cat. She padded closer, wondering how his pelt shone like that. He stood up and stretched, then walked towards the river. Mistyfoot gasped, he was coming towards her. *Has he seen me? ....Wow! He's the handsomest tom I have ever seen!* Her breathing grew heavier as he neared the bank. But he bent over and took a gulp of water. Mistyfoot let out a sigh. She was a bit disappointed that he hadn't come over to talk to her and he hadn't seen her. *Well I guess I will introduce myself to* him *then.* She started to move forward when he slipped, landing in the water. He splashed and waved his paws in the air, thrashing around like there were thorns in his pelt. Mistyfoot bunched her muscles to go save him and then remembered how low the water was and relaxed.

" You know the water is shallow enough to stand in" she purred with amusement as he looked up with startled eyes as he realised some one had been watching him then broke off when she saw that his eyes were of a emerald green intensity, seeming to look right through her. She felt her heart skip a beat and then start to race. He stopped flailing around and then found his feet. He looked up at her

again, this time with embarrassment.

" Err, thank you for pointing out that I wasn't going to drown."

Mistyfoot couldn't help but mew with amusement.

"You looked like you were trying to catch all the fish in the river at once! All that splashing must have scared them all away by now," she sighed, " now I'll have to go find another spot down stream." She turned and started to walk toward the cover of the reeds.

"Wait!"

She swiveled around to face the orange tom.

" Do I get to know the name of my savior?" he joked.

She purred, "Mistyfoot of Riverclan."

" Well thank you Mistyfoot. I am Fireheart of Thunderclan," he dipped his head," if there is anything you need I will gladly repay you for saving me." He splashed out of the water and onto the far bank. As he stepped into the sunlight, he lit up in flame. Mistyfoot purred, *no wonder Bluestar named you Fireheart.*

That night, Fireheart's dreams were filled with a blue-grey she-cat. Her face was blurred so he didn't know who she was. At her belly were two tiny kits.

The full moon blazed above Firehearts head as he followed his clan to four trees, Greystripe at his side. Tonight was the gathering and Fireheart felt excited and nervous to talk to the other clans. *I wonder if I'll see Mistyfoot again?* It had been four sunrises since he had fallen in to the river and he had not seen her since.

As Thunderclan entered the hollow, Fireheart saw that the other three clans were already mixed between each other sharing news. Fireheart noticed that everyone seemed to be in a very cheerful and friendly mood.

" Hey Fireheart, let's go over to that group of Riverclan she-cats, they look pretty talkative tonight,"

Fireheart spotted Silverstream seated amongst the group and sighed, *typical Greystripe. Trust him to spot the group with* her *in it.* He pricked his ears as he saw a blue-grey cat walk over and sit beside Silverstream. A bolt of excitement rushed through him as he recognized Mistyfoot.

Fireheart turned to see that Greystripe was still impatiently waiting for him to reply.

"Oh, uh, yeah, let's go over."

As they approached, they heard giggles rise from the group and Fireheart tried to act confident as he and his friend padded forward. He mewed a greeting and the she-cats turned their heads to look at them. Fireheart felt uncomfortable under so many pairs of eyes and turned to see Greystripe looking at Silverstream. *Could he be any more obvious!*

"Hi, I'm Fireheart, and this is my friend Greystripe, we're from Thunderclan." He mewed.

In total there were five other cats, Mistyfoot, Silverstream, a long-legged light brown tabby, a thin grey she-cat and a black she-cat. The last three he didn't recognize.

Silverstream stepped forward and dipped her head.

"Hello again Fireheart and Greystripe, let me introduce you to my friends. These two are Tallpoppy and Darkflower from Shadowclan," she waved her tail toward the tabby and the black she-cat,

"This is Ashfoot from Windclan and Mistyfoot from Riverclan."

"It's nice to meet you all," Greystripe purred as he dipped his head.

A yowl from above silenced the clearing as the four leaders waited a top the great rock.

Fireheart took a seat next to Greystripe and spotted Silverstream on his other side.

"Hi again Fireheart,"

Fireheart had trouble keeping the fur on his back to stay flat as he turned to see Mistyfoot sitting beside him.

" Uhhh, hello Mistyfoot," he quickly looked up at her face and then turned to watch Bluestar announce Thunderclans' news. He felt hot under his coat and kept glancing to the side of him where he and Mistyfoot almost brushed pelts.

Although it was hard to concentrate with her sitting so close to him, Fireheart did manage to notice that this green leaf had brought harmony and happiness between the clans. There was only good news to pass on and the leaders had even shared a few jokes in their reports. All four clans had laughed together.

As Tallstar, the last leader to speak, finished his report and began to bunch his muscles to jump down the great rock, Crookedstar of Riverclan stepped forward once more.

"Wait! I would just like to say one more thing," he waited as the cats below reseated themselves.

" I think, since this green leaf has been so kind to us and we all feel in such a good mood," he chuckled, " don't you think it wouldn't hurt to go home a little later? Maybe we could all chat a little longer than usual? It just seems like the right time to do so." He looked at the other three leaders and they all nodded without hesitation. Bluestar stepped forward.

" We will stay longer tonight, it is a special night because this moon, no one has quarreled or had any arguments." She leapt down from the rock and melted into the sea of cats. The other leaders soon followed, joining conversations with other clans.

Fireheart turned his attention to the gossiping she-cats and listened in to their conversation.

" He's so caring and he always comes hunting with me! I love that about him, how he always wants to spend time with me."

"Yeah! I know what you mean Ashfoot! Wetfoot's the same! He may

seem tough on the outside, but he actually cares a lot about me." *Urrr, she-cat talk.*

" I always see him trailing after you Darkflower, it's so cute! I wish Stumpytail would be like that with me, but he seems like he's just not interested in a mate..."

Fireheart stopped listening and noticed that Greystripe was walking towards them from another group of cats with Mistyfoot and Silverstream.

" Hey!" Tallpoppy mewed.

Silverstream and Mistyfoot wandered over to sit beside Tallpoppy while Greystripe broke off and headed towards Fireheart.

" We decided to come back here since that group of Shadowclan cats were mucking around." Fireheart rolled his eyes. Greystripe glanced toward the she-cats and gestured for Fireheart to follow him as he sat beside Silverstream. Fireheart settled down next to Mistyfoot.

He over heard Darkflower, who was on the opposite side of Mistyfoot talking.

" Hey, Mistyfoot, do you have a mate?"

Fireheart tensed beside the she-cat and waited for her answer. She shook her head.

"Oh, that's a surprise. I'd think a pretty she-cat like you would be taken"

Fireheart saw mischief dance in the black cat's eyes. Mistyfoot cuffed her over the ear and they started bickering like kits. *I know its not my place or anything, but why do I feel relieved that she said no?*

" Come to think of it," Tallpoppy giggled and the group grew silent as she went on, " since that you four-" she waved her tail over the Thunderclan and Riverclan cats were seated next to each other- " don't have mates, I think Greystripe and Silverstream would be perfect as a couple, Fireheart and Mistyfoot would be too! It's too

bad you're from different clans!"

The four cats looked stunned at her words and all looked down at their paws.

" Where did that comment come from all of a sudden!" Ashfoot exclaimed.

"Oh, I was just having a bit of fun, sorry for embarrassing you four. I probably should have just kept my mouth shut." Tallpoppy looked down at he paws in embarrassment.

Fireheart looked back at the retreating clans as Thunderclan climbed out of the hollow. He had enjoyed tonight, but he still felt a bit of shock towards what Tallpoppy had said.

What had she said? You and Mistyfoot would be perfect together? Is that true? Well, I know one thing's for sure, that can never happen because we're from different clans.

Fireheart crept out of the dirt place and made his way to the river. A rustle from the far bank caught his attention. A blue shape glided out and mewed a greeting. It waded across the shallow river and onto the grass beside Fireheart. Fireheart pressed his muzzle into the cats blue fur and let her sweet scent flow into his mouth.

"How's Riverclan going, Mistyfoot?"

"Fine, Fireheart."

Fireheart purred, "You're so beautiful, you know? Your so smart and brave, your blue fur is so soft and shiny, how deep your eyes can be, how they are so blue like the bottom of the river, or like a jay's feather. That is what makes me love you. You're the most precious thing to me Mistyfoot."

Mistyfoot stared up at the tom that she had been secretly seeing for two moons. *Did he really mean all that? But...? He's so handsome, I could never be any she-cat he would love, could I? But he just said, right then, to me, that he feels the same way I do about him. He said love, but does that mean he loves me? Is this a dream? Well if it is, it wouldn't hurt if I told him...*

"I... I love you Fireheart, and I want us to be together, I know it's impossible but..."

"Shhh, I understand, you don't need to tell me when that's what is keeping me up at night. The thought that we can never be together." He licked Mistyfoot between the ears and they settled down next to each other in the tall lush grass.

Mistyfoot had been seeing Fireheart for four moons now and she was getting tired, she wasn't getting sleep, but she still had to do her warrior duties.

One afternoon, after coming back to camp from a hunting trip, she lay down in the camp clearing, washing her paws. The Riverclan camp was a clearing surrounded by reed beds. The camp was an island; the only way to reach it was by swimming. Every cat, from kit to elder knew how to swim and could leave the camp safely. But there was also a path of stones aacross the stream that surrounded the camp that other clans could use when the leaders needed to speak to the clan leader.

Once she was finished washing her paws, she rested her head on the soft earth and closed her eyes. She quickly opened them as she felt something inside her belly move. She licked her belly and for the first time, realised that she was fatter than usual. *I... I'm expecting kits? Are they... Firehearts?*

Fireheart bit into a sparrow and started chewing. He was sitting by himself in the clearing. Greystripe was out on a border patrol and Fireheart was about to go hunting once he finished his meal.

"Hi Fireheart!" Fireheart looked up as Sandstorm trotted up with a vole in her jaws. She settled down beside him, brushing pelts.

" Hi Sandstorm."

" What are you doing after you eat your sparrow?" she asked quizzically

"I was going to go hunting in the forest."

"Can I come keep you company?" she asked with pleading eyes,

"I don't see why not."

He waited for her to finish her vole then they trotted out of the camp through the gorse tunnel. As they made their way up the ravine, Sandstorm broke into a run. Fireheart followed her and it ended up as a race. Sandstorm was beating him by a tail length, *wow, she's fast,* he thought to himself. He was having so much fun with her, twisting around trees, dodging trailing brambles and soaring over fallen tree trunks. As they sprinted past the Riverclan border, Fireheart turned his head to see a grey cat on the other side of the river. He slowed down and identified her to be Mistyfoot. The look on her face was of acceptance and sadness. Fireheart halted and the two of them stood there.

"Mistyfoot! It's not what it looks like, she's just my clan mate!" Fireheart tried desperately to wipe off the sad expression on her face, but she turned away with the same melancholy feeling of betrayal towards him and then took off into the reeds.

The stiff brittle stalks whipped at Mistyfoot as she charged past but she didn't feel it, for the pain in her heart was so much stronger. The fire cat had caressed it with the low dim warmth of a weak flame, but now he had turned the flame to full and her heart was burning.

I expected this, every time I see him I think he is going to say he doesn't want me because I don't think some one like me deserves him. I knew it would happen... but that doesn't mean it didn't hurt. I came to the border hoping to see him, to tell him... and then to find him running, having so much fun with that other she-cat. I know I'm jealous of her. But not only because she was there instead of me, but because of the way Fireheart was looking at her with those forest green eyes. The way they were caring, protective and... and...loving. That's why I know he doesn't want me.

Fireheart stared at the spot Mistyfoot has just been with shock and dismay in his eyes. What had just happened?

A crash in the bush behind him made him turn around to see Sandstorms confused face pop out.

" Why did you stop?" she looked hurt and puzzled.

"Never mind."

"What? Am I not important enough to tell?" she asked

"No! It's just..." he sighed, "lets just get on with hunting, Bluestar won't be very happy if we don't bring anything back with us."

He started to walk off with his tail and ears down. Fireheart felt so bad about what happened.

"Wait, Fireheart," Sandstorm mewed in a soft voice. Fireheart was surprised at her awkward tone. Usually Sandstorm had a loud fiery voice. He turned to face her.

"Am I your friend?"

"Of coarse"

"Do...do you think you could ever think of me as more than just your friend?"

"Well, your one of my best friends but... I'm sorry I don't think of you in any stronger feelings Sandstorm."

She looked at him with hurt eyes, as if he had clawed out her heart. but she just mewed softly,

"I understand."

They hunted until the first Starclan warriors appeared in the sky. They had worked in silence, not sure what to say to the other. They came back to camp with a fair amount of fresh-kill.

"Hey Fireheart! How was your hunt with Sandstorm? Did she say something to upset you? You look pretty down." Greystripe questioned him.

"Never mind, it's a long story."

The next few nights, Fireheart went to Mistyfoot and his meeting

spot, but every night she wasn't there. He tried to be on as many hunting and border patrols that went close to the river, but he never saw her. It was at the next gathering when he saw her again and she was looking quite plump. *The fish must be running well for Riverclan this leaf-fall*. He thought as he padded up to her.

"Mistyfoot," he signaled to her that they should talk under a holly bush in private. At first she hesitated and then followed him under.

"Listen, when you left, Sandstorm, the she-cat I was with, she asked me if I thought of her as more than a friend. I said no, you know why? Because you are the one and only that I think of as more than a friend. Why would you think I would love her when I have you?"

" Because... because our relationship is difficult, because we are from different clans, because it is hard for me to register that *you*, the tom whom so many she-cats desire would be with me. Me! Of all the other she-cats. Me! A she-cat from Riverclan!"

"Yes, I chose you, because you are the most amazingly talented and beautiful cat from any clan." Fireheart rubbed against her head. After a few moments, Mistyfoot pulled away.

"Fireheart, there's something I need to tell you. I'm... I'm expecting your kits."

Fireheart looked at Mistyfoot with shocked green eyes.

" That's... that's fantastic! That's incredible!" he sprang to his paws and nuzzled her.

"Oh Mistyfoot! I'm so proud of you! You'll make a terrific mother!"

Back at the Riverclan camp, Mistyfoot settled into her nest. She was so happy and relieved about how Fireheart had taken the news. *I'm so glad we made up. I couldn't think about living when he was with another she-cat. Ha, that just proves how selfish I really am.*

" Fireheart, I love you! I have for a while and I just need to get it out! I love your green eyes and your fiery coat! I love the way you talk to me! I love the way you are so loyal yet you do what is right! I love you Fireheart and no one can tell me different! I know you

don't feel the same way but I think you should! If I care for you that much, shouldn't you care for me?!" Sandstorm gasped for air as she finished shouting. Every cat in the clan had heard her! Fireheart had just been lying down with Greystripe sharing tongues when Sandstorm had rushed up and confessed.

Fireheart felt hot embarrassment under his pelt as every cat stared at him.

"Sandstorm, can you please come with me?" he walked quickly out of the camp and into the forest with the light ginger she-cat behind him.

"Why did you embarrass me in front of the whole clan!"

"I wanted to get it out there and then. Besides, it was something you needed to know," she looked down at her paws,

"I'm sorry I embarrassed you, I didn't think it through before I shouted it out in the clearing."

Fireheart sighed

"I'm sorry Sandstorm but I told you before, I don't think of you as anything more than a good friend, even if you do." Fireheart turned towards the forest.

"Where are you going?" he turned to face her,

"I'm going to clear my head," he bounded off into the trees, leaving the she-cat by the ravine.

Sandstorm is making my whole situation ten times harder. She loves me, Mistyfoot loves me, one is in my clan and the other isn't. But I love the one who isn't! What's wrong with me? And now my mate from another clan is expecting my kits! I've put myself in such a mess. It's not Sandstorms fault, it's mine. If I just hadn't seen Mistyfoot that first night, I could have still been happy with Sandstorm as a mate. But now, either way I'm going to hurt one of them.

Mistyfoot padded up to the fresh-kill pile and picked out a fat trout with her claws. She was bored of being stuck in the camp, unable to

go out into the reeds and fish beside the bank. No, she couldn't. Because she was expecting any day now. She felt stressed at being away from Fireheart for such a long period of time and she couldn't ever sit still. She started pacing, making a trail in the dirt below her paws. She completely forgot about her fish and was distracted with her worried thoughts.

Mudfur trotted over from the medicine cats' den with a mouth full of strong smelling herbs and placed them at his feet as he halted in front of her, a frown upon his light brown face.

"Mistyfoot, you shouldn't be out here pacing around and worrying so much! It's bad for the kits for you to be stressed like this! You should be resting. Those poor little things must be as tired as you look, so get something to eat and go back to the nursery and sleep."

"Sorry," Mistyfoot mewed guiltily. She grasped the trout between her teeth and trudged back to the nursery.

She dropped the fish as a ripple of pain pulsed through her body. She let out a yowl and staggered on her paws. Cats rushed out of the surrounding reed dens to help and Mudfur ran over to her and guided her to the nursery.

" It's alright Mistyfoot, your kits are coming, stay calm. Come lie down here," Mudfur whipped his head around and scanned the crowd for an apprentice,

"Shadepaw! Go collect some moss and drench it in some water! Silverstream! Go find me a stick that Mistyfoot can bite down on!"

The two cats nodded and then raced off.

The pain seemed to go on for seasons. But finally, it was over.

"How... how is she? How are the kits Mudfur?" Silverstream asked worriedly,

"She's exhausted, but she did a great job. There are two, kits, a she-cat and a tom."

Mudfur watched as Silverstream squeezed into the nursery.

She gasped as she saw the tiny tom. He stood out so much from his sister and sleeping mothers blue fur.

"It couldn't be... no there must be some mistake!"

She rushed out of the den and headed for the river. Just as she reached it, three cats appeared on the Thunderclan border. Two tabbies and... a ginger tom.

"There's no mistaking it now. They've definitely got to be... his. Oh Mistyfoot, what have you done?" *So much for peace between the clans!*

"Frozenkit! Catch!" Mistyfoot watched as a ball of moss rose into the air and her tiny ginger kit twisted to meet it. He caught it and landed squarely on all four paws. She huffed to herself. *Such a sophisticated move for such a young cat.* She marveled at how talented her kits were, much more skilled than their older den mates Minnowkit, Toadkit and Pinekit.

Frozenkit tossed the moss ball back to his sister, Rainkit, and she caught it between her teeth.

"Pass it back to me Rainkit, I'm going to try and catch it with my back paws!"

"Hold on a second Frozenkit, I think that's taking it a bit too far." Mistyfoot hauled herself up from the ground and padded up to her kits.

"Please Mistyfoot! Can I just have one go?" Frozenkit tilted his head and stared up at his mother with river blue eyes. Mistyfoot twitched her tail then rolled her eyes,

" Fine, but be carful," she sighed and sat down on the green grass.

Frozenkit crouched down and swished his tale side to side. Rainkit flung the ball and it soared through the air in a wide ark. Frozenkit twisted around to face the opposite direction of the moss and pushed his hind legs into the air. The moss ball snagged on his claw as he unsheathed them and he landed back onto all fours.

Minnowkit and Toadkit who had been watching from the entrance of the nursery padded over with open mouths.

"How did you do that Frozenkit?" Minnowkit, the smallest of her litter stammered,

"Well, you need to be really quick and have good balance, see you have to spread your paws out wide to make a bigger base..."

Mistyfoot purred at her son. He was so talented and so popular with the other kits. Rainkit was also talented and she thought that her daughter was outshone a bit by her brother. But Rainkit still adored her brother and followed him everywhere.

" Mistyfoot!"

Mistyfoot's thoughts were interrupted as she heard her name being called. Silverstream padded up to her and greeted her with a lick on the ear.

"Would you like to go hunting together? I know you haven't been out much since the kits arrived."

Silverstream had a good point. Since two moons ago, when her kits had been born, she had been stuck in camp. It would be good to do a bit of exercise. But Mistyfoot sensed that the reason Silverstream wanted her alone was for more than just catching a few fish.

The two she-cats plodded through the reeds and out of the Riverclan camp.

"I think we should fish near the Thunderclan border, I was hunting there a few days ago and the fish are plentiful around sunning rocks." Silverstream called over her shoulder to Mistyfoot who was trailing behind her. At the word Thunderclan, Mistyfoot's heart jumped. She hoped Silverstream hadn't noticed. But Mistyfoot had a feeling that Silverstream may already know something about Fireheart.

They ran through the brittle forest of reeds and raced each other over puddles and shallow streams. It felt so good to be moving and running again, Mistyfoot felt like she was an apprentice again with

no worries about kits or other clans or warrior duties. Just a free soul with no troublesome thoughts racing through her head. As the two cats came near the river beside Thunderclan, they both stopped to catch their breath. The run through the marshy ground had been exhilarating and Mistyfoot could still feel her heart beating fast. She wasn't sure if it was from the run or because she hadn't been this close to Firehearts clans' territory for two moons.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, Mistyfoot and Silverstream settled down on the bank beside the river. Mistyfoot saw a flash of silver beneath the waters surface and lashed her paw to scoop up a shining trout. It hit the ground with a thud and Silverstream pounce on top of it and killed it with one bite. She took a step back and sighed,

"Mistyfoot, who is the father of your kits?" she looked at Mistyfoot's startled face,

"You know that we are best friends, you can tell me. I won't judge you for who it is you love."

Mistyfoot looked at her friend for a long moment.

" Do I really need to tell you? You already know, don't you?"

"It doesn't matter if I already know. Why did you never tell me? Didn't you trust me? You know I would never tell anyone."

"I'm sorry Silverstream, I should have told you. I would never doubt you to keep a secret, but I just didn't know when, where or how I would tell you."

Silverstream padded up to Mistyfoot and brushed her head against Mistyfoot's shoulder in a comforting gesture.

" They're Firehearts, aren't they?" she whispered in her ear. Mistyfoot nodded solemnly.

" Do you still love him?"

"Of course!"

Silverstream said nothing but padded back to the bank and peered into the slow flowing river.

Four moons had passed since Fireheart had last seen Mistyfoot. He had heard at the gathering that first moon that she had given birth to two kits and Fireheart had felt like he would leap with joy. But he knew that if he did, then every cat at the gathering would have know that he was the father. Everyday he would think about his kits. Were they toms or she-cats? Did they take after their mother or their father? Every time he though about meeting them, he would become excited and fidgety. They would be around four moons old by now, not long until they would be apprenticed and he would be able to meet them!

Mistyfoot watched her fast growing kits play fighting in the clearing from the entrance to the nursery. It was pouring, but the rain didn't seem to bother the two large kits as they tussled in the mud. Some she-cats might have thought her a bad mother for letting them get cold and muddy. But they were having so much fun in the unfamiliar terrain and they looked like they were quite hot under their mud-slicked pelts from jumping and running so much. Mistyfoot never minded the mud taking longer to clean out. She loved her kits and wished with all her might that Fireheart could be here with her.

" Let all those cats old enough to swim, gather here beneath me for a clan meeting." Crookedstars summons rang out across the clearing and cats started to gather around the log on which all leaders of Riverclan stood to address the clan. On the ground beside him were Rainkit and Frozenkit.

"Frozenkit and Rainkit are six moons old and are ready to become apprentices." The two kits' eyes gleamed and they both sat straight and tried to hold in their excitement.

"Rainkit, from this day forward until you earn you warrior name, you will be known as Rainpaw. Stonefur, step forward," The Grey tom padded up to the log where Crookedstar sat and looked down at Rainpaw.

" I am trusting you to pass down all the knowledge you hold and

make me proud. You were my apprentice many moons ago and I hope that you will train Rainpaw and turn her into as fine a warrior as you are."

Rainpaw and Stonefur Touched noses and padded to the front of the crowd. Mistyfoot was surprised and delighted that her brother had been chosen to be the mentor of her kit. Pinepaw, Toadpaw and Minnowpaw had all become apprentices a moon ago and now Mosspelt, another she-cat, had given birth to three new kits. Shadepaw and Heavypaw had also been given their warrior names, Shadepelt and Heavystep. Riverclan were doing well this leaf-bare. The river hadn't frozen and it seamed that the cold was not too harsh.

Crookedstar turned his amber gaze to the other kit trembling with excitement.

" Frozenkit, from this moment on, until you have earned your warrior name, you will be known as Frozenpaw. Leopardfur, you are ready for another apprentice, you shall be Frozenpaws mentor and I believe that you can teach this young tom the skills of which you have learnt."

Leopardfur stepped forward and touched noses with Frozenpaw. Mistyfoot was so proud that Leopardfur, the clan deputy had been chosen as Frozenpaws mentor.

"What are we going to do first? Are we going to go around the territory like Pinepaw, Toadpaw and Minnowpaw? They said that's what they did when they became apprentices!"

Leopardfur purred at her eager apprentice,

"Sure, I'll show you all the different clan scents around the borders."

A cheer went up around the gathered cats and Mistyfoot felt her heart swell.

"Rainpaw! Frozenpaw! Rainpaw! Frozenpaw!"

She watched as her two kits disappeared through the reeds and onto the flat plains of their territory.

"Kits, they grow up so fast. You only get to stay with them for six moons and after that, they don't let you do anything, not even lick fur that's sticking up," Mosspelt, who had had numerous litters sighed as she came to sit beside Mistyfoot and watched the last reeds still.

" I'm really going to miss being so close to them, Mosspelt. They have become such a big part of me."

"Yeah, they do. I always miss my kits. But their mother just becomes another one of their clan mates to them," she meowed sourly.

" But not all kits are like that," she added quickly after seeing Mistyfoot's sad expression,

"Some are still very close to their mothers. More she-cats then toms though."

The two mothers went over to the fresh-kill pile and shared-tongues while the sun drooped below the reeds.

The evening patrol entered the camp and Blackclaw, the leader of the patrol headed for Crookedstars den. Mistyfoot padded over to Silverstream who had been on the patrol with Blackclaw and his apprentice Pinepaw.

"What's wrong? What happened on the border?"

" We scented fox near the Thunderclan border. It was fresh and we think that there may be two of them, a male and a female."

Mistyfoot looked at Silverstream with worried eyes.

"Rainpaw and Frozenpaw are out there! What if they run in to the foxes?"

" Don't worry Mistyfoot," Silverstream reassured her. She stretched her tail over Mistyfoot's back, " Don't forget that Stonefur and Leopardfur are with them. I think those two can handle a couple of foxes."

This hardly reassured her though. Her two kits out there, with no warrior training!

It had been almost a moon since Frozenpaw had become an apprentice and he was already better at hunting and fighting than the other apprentices. He was out by the stepping-stones near the Thunderclan border, fishing at the bank. He had a small pile of fresh-kill already piled next to him. He was so intent on the waters surface, that he did not notice the horrific scent of fox creeping closer. There was a deep bark from behind him then everything went black.

Fireheart stretched in the strengthening new-leaf sun and yawned. New shoots were sprouting around the forest and it was slowly growing green again. The prey was coming out of their burrows and the fresh-kill pile was growing larger everyday.

"Fireheart!" Runningwind bounded up to his side,

"Bluestar wants you, me, Whitestorm and Brightpaw to hunt near the stepping stones."

"Alright, lets go!"

The two toms met Whitestorm and Brightpaw at the gorse tunnel and they ran through the forest to the river. The patrol split up with Whitestorm and Brightpaw going closer to the forest and Fireheart and Runningwind hunting near the river.

Fireheart crouched low with his belly fur touching the ground. He crept closer and closer to the unbeknownst shrew nibbling at an acorn underneath an oak tree. He pounced and was on the rodent in a heartbeat. He bit down on its' neck and the body went limp. He buried it under the oak and scented the air for more prey. He picked up a trail of mouse that went down beside the river near the stepping-stones. He saw from the corner of his eye, a tabby tail dart off in the opposite direction and guessed that Runningwind was following something closer to the forest.

Fireheart followed the mouse trail to the river bank and glanced across the water to see a young orange tom on the Riverclan side

staring intently into the river. He looked to be around the age of an apprentice but also was quite large and muscular. *Who does he remind me of?*

Fireheart stood there staring at him for a few heartbeats until something down the bank caught his eye. A flash of red moved slowly toward the apprentice and then dissolved into the reeds. Fireheart felt his fur rise as the wind blew the scent of fox towards him. The apprentice, so absorbed in fishing, hadn't noticed even the scent coming toward him. Fireheart gasped as the fox stalked out from the reeds and crept up on the unaware young cat. This cat could easily get killed! Fireheart had to do something. The fox didn't know he was here, if he shouted out to the tom, the fox would strike and kill the apprentice before he could do anything. Fireheart launched himself onto the first stepping-stone and bounded across to the next. The fox was nearing the apprentice. If saving a life meant crossing the border, he had to do it. Hopefully no one would see. As he landed on the Riverclan side of the river, he saw the fox pounce. *Oh no! I'm too late!* The young cat was in his jaws and Fireheart heard the piercing screech of the orange apprentice. Fireheart was not only furious at the fox but at himself for being so slow. He charged at the red fox and jumped on top of him, knocking the Riverclan apprentice out of his grip. He fell to the ground and with weary eyes looked around confused. Fireheart had no time to help him. He must fight off this fox! He scored his claws along the foxes flank and nipped at several places. He knew that foxes would not know sophisticated moves and would just use their teeth to try to bite. He clawed the foxes belly fur with all four paws and rolled out of the way as it collapsed. He spun around and chomped down on its tail. With a howl the fox jumped up and ran back into the reeds.

Out of breath, Fireheart turned to the apprentice.

"Are you okay?"

Although the apprentice had teeth marks along his back that looked very painful, his eyes were bright and he looked at Fireheart in awe.

"Thank you! You saved my life!"

"You have to be more careful. Even if your hunting, you need to have all your senses alert for other signs apart from prey." The young apprentice nodded and looked serious and a bit embarrassed for not being aware of the danger.

"I'd better take you back to your camp."

The young orange tom looked startled,

"Y-you don't have to do that you know, I can get there by myself. Besides you're a Thunderclan cat."

" Do you really think you can get to your camp on your own? Look at that bite you have! I don't think you could even walk that far. Let me help you get there and explain to Crookedstar."

The apprentice twitched his ear,

"Fine, I guess that's true,"

Fireheart help him up from the ground and they slowly hobbled through the tall reeds. The apprentice was leaning on Firehearts shoulder. Their fur seemed to melt together and it was hard to distinguish who was who. Their pelts were the exact same shade of orange.

"So, what's your name?"

"Frozenpaw, what's yours?"

"Fireheart,"

"Thank you Fireheart. I was stupid to not pick up that scent. You must think I'm the biggest mouse-brain in the forest!" Fireheart purred.

"We were all mouse-brains once. We learn from doing reckless things."

As they entered the camp, the heads of the cats in the clearing turned toward where the reeds were parting and the two toms padded forward. There came a shocked yowl from one of the den

entrances and Mistyfoot raced toward her son.

"Frozenpaw! What happened to you? And why did you bring a Thunderclan cat into our camp?" Fireheart found it hard to act like he and Mistyfoot had nothing to do with each other and stared down at the apprentice.

"This apprentice was fishing near the stepping-stones when a fox crept up on him. He wasn't able to scent it because he was too intent on his fishing," As Fireheart went on, more cats came out into the clearing to listen. When he finished, Mistyfoot spoke,

"Well, thank you so much for saving my son Fireheart, I am in your debt."

Fireheart jolted. *Son! What? You mean I just rescued my son?! I just had a conversation with him without even knowing he was my son!* Although thousands of thoughts and emotions were running through Firehearts head, he managed to keep the fur along his back straight and his face stern. He gave away nothing in his eyes.

"Very well, I will be on my way then," he dipped his head and turned to leave out the way he came. The Riverclan cats watched him go from the clearing.

From the far side of the clearing, a cat watched the rest of the clan. Silverstream had seen, once again the similarities between Fireheart and Frozenpaw. *They look identical apart from the eyes. Yes, Frozenpaws' eyes are definitely his mothers. Have any other cats noticed how much they look alike?* She narrowed her eyes as she looked around at every cat, but none of them had seemed to look at the two toms suspiciously.

Fireheart stumbled across the stepping-stones and on to Thunderclan territory. He was still stunned that he had met his son. It had been so hard to stop himself from bounding towards Mistyfoot and yowl out, " I'm so proud of you!" The young tom, Frozenpaw was a handsome young cat and looked strong and well fed. He wondered when he would meet his other kit. Perhaps he already had and he just didn't know it? Had they been in the crowd of Riverclan cats back in the clearing?

He passed through the gorse tunnel to see that Greystripe had returned from the Windclan border patrol. He padded up to his friend and took a deep breath.

"Greystripe, I have to tell you something," Greystripe raised his head from where he was lying down and enjoying the new-leaf sun and gazed up at the orange tom. Fireheart lead the way out of camp and up the ravine. He weaved his way through the bushes and trees until he came to a large bramble bush. Fireheart had discovered this hide away not far from the camp, a few moons ago and decided that it was a good place for privacy. As the two cats crawled underneath the bush, the thick, cramped space seemed to widen until they were sitting between the roots. There was a sort of cavern here where the branches made a dome and the two toms had enough space to sit down. The dappled light was dim but Fireheart knew that the sun would start to set soon.

Throughout all these seasons, Fireheart had neglected to tell Greystripe about Mistyfoot. In fact, he hadn't told any one. Taking another deep breath, he began to confess.

"Greystripe, I have to tell you something. Something that I should not be proud of but can't help being so," Fireheart looked up from staring down at his paws and looked the grey tom straight in the eyes.

"I love Mistyfoot, from Riverclan!"

He had expected Greystripe to gasp or ask him what was he on about, but he didn't say anything. He didn't even look shocked. After what seemed like moons to Fireheart, he replied,

"I know," Fireheart gasped,

"You know? But, what? How did you know?"

" You could never hide something like that from me, Fireheart. I'm just glad that you were able to tell me. Thank you," he dipped his head then crawled out of the bramble bush in silence, leaving Fireheart sitting between the roots, stunned.

Mistyfoot felt so happy. So happy that her beloved Fireheart now knew who his kit was. Although he had not yet met Rainpaw, she knew that it would not be long.

She watched as Mudfur lead the apprentice into the medicine cat's den to heal his bite mark. As she gazed around the clearing at the cats retreating back to their dens or heading to the fresh-kill pile, she spotted Silverstream padding toward her. She mewed a greeting and Silverstream replied with a purr.

"You look awfully happy today!"

"Well, you know, it's just a really great day,"

Mistyfoot clawed at the earth, feeling hot under her fur. Was she really that obvious to read?

"Oh, of coarse, it is a fine day, and new-leaf has arrived. But soon the two-legs will come," Silverstream frowned.

"But I'm surprised, Mistyfoot, that you have not attempted to go see how Frozenpaw is doing. That seemed like a nasty wound."

Mistyfoot thought for a moment. Why hadn't she gone to see him? What had stopped her? Was it that she was scared that he might think that Fireheart was his father? *I should tell him now that he has seen his father. He has the right to know.*

She padded toward Mudfurs' den and slipped between the reeds that sheltered it. As she peered through the grass, she saw Frozenpaw asleep in a nest of moss and reeds. On his back, leaves clung to his fur and their juice ran into his wound soothing the pain. Mistyfoot heard the brittle stalks clatter as Mudfur entered the small den where his patients were treated. He looked up as he padded forward and spotted Mistyfoot.

"Ah, I see you have come to check on Frozenpaw. He is doing well. He is a strong young cat and a fast healer. He will be back to training in a couple of days. He can start helping around the camp tomorrow though."

Mistyfoot knew that Frozenpaw would hate cleaning out dirty nests

all day. She felt bad for her son. But everyone had to learn, If it be the hard way or not.

She heard him stir from his slumber and look up at her with sleepy eyes. Mudfur trotted out of the Medicine cat's den and headed toward the elders den, leaving the two cats alone.

"How are you feeling?"

" it... it's sore," Frozenpaw looked up at Mistyfoot with pain in his ice blue eyes.

"Frozenpaw, there's something I need to tell you. I know you haven't ever asked me about this, and I thank you for that," Mistyfoot looked up at her son,

" I need to tell you who your father is."

Frozenpaw looked at his mother in astonishment. He had always wanted to find out who his father was, but he had never asked because he knew that his mother didn't like to talk about that sort of thing.

" Your father, Frozenpaw, is from another clan."

"What!!!" Frozenpaw looked at his mother with disbelief. It couldn't be! This had to be a joke! How could Mistyfoot be mates with a cat from another clan? How could she? Rage filled him and he unsheathed his claws in anger.

Mistyfoot looked down at her paws with shame.

"You know him," she murmured, she looked up at that moment with sadness in her eyes.

" Your father is Fireheart."

At this, Frozenpaw was too shocked to even speak. Fireheart? The one who had saved him?

Fireheart trembled as he felt bodies all around him press against him as they pushed swiftly past him like a fast flowing river. There

was nothing around him put fog and he felt that he couldn't breath with all the cats surrounding him, engulfing him. He felt like he was going to choke on fur, but then the steady flow of cats stopped and he was left alone in the fog. All he could hear was the roar of blood pulsing in his ears. *So real, so... real...*

There was an eerie silence and then it was broken by the soft pad of paw steps. A luminous shape dissolved out of the fog and padded toward him. It's orange glow shone and grew stronger as the cat neared. Suddenly, the orange was drowned out by an even more powerful blue light which over powered the fog. Firehearts' vision turned blue and he felt himself collapse to the ground. Then the light faded and a small pool of water glowed dimly in place of the cat. Fireheart padded up to the puddle and peered into it.

There were three cats in it's reflection. Three Starclan Warriors. Their silvery star speckled coats glittered on the waters surface and Fireheart took in a breath. The three cats stared at him and started to speak.

"We're so sorry Fireheart, but we can not speak to you in your dreams any longer. There is no need, for there is a more powerful fire than the one which you yield."

The three cats dissolved and were replaces by a tortoiseshell.

Spottedleaf! Fireheart wanted to cry out to her but no words could escape his mouth.

"I will miss you, my beloved."

She started to fade and Fireheart panicked as the pool started drying up. he pawed at the earth but the pool had dissapeared. The murky fog grew stronger until everything was black.

His eyes flashed open and he stood up in his nest gasping. His clan mates slept peacefully around him and as he looked around, he noticed a blue glow that seemed oddly familiar. He pushed through the entrance to the warriors den and out into the clearing to see an orange tom with blazing blue eyes gazing up at the stars from the high rock. As he gasped, the tom faced him, his gaze calm and wise.

He dipped his head then dissolved into nothing.

" Frozenpaw?"

Frozenpaw plodded to his den on heavy paws. *How could she? Fireheart is a* Thunderclan *cat! I can't believe I'm half-clan. What would my clan mates think of me if they knew who my father was?* He glanced toward Mosspelt and Silverstream sharing a water vole by the fresh-kill pile and wondered if they would ever find out.

He pushed his way past the stiff reeds at the entrance to the den and curled up into a ball, grimacing as pain shot through him from his injury from the fox. Although Frozenpaw had so many thoughts whizzing through his head, his eyelids grew heavy and he fell asleep.

Frozenpaw felt the warmth of sunshine touch his pelt. *Morning already?* It seemed that he had only closed his eyes a few heartbeats ago before they flickered open to a sight that was not his den or anywhere familiar. He was lying beside a beautiful clear stream with silver fish dashing past. He heard the slow flow of the water as it splashed over the stones. There was a cloudless sky above him and the reeds clattered against each other in the warm breeze. Paw steps behind him alerted Frozenpaw of an approaching cat and he whirled around to see the reeds parting as a white cat, her pelt speckled with black dots, appear. Around her paws, stars seemed to shimmer and her pelt was lightly coated in star shine. Frozenpaw was shocked as he noticed that he could vaigly see the trees behind her through her pelt.

"Greetings Frozenpaw," the white she-cat took a pace forward, her voice gentle and welcoming,

"I am Brambleberry. I served Riverclan as a medicine cat many moons ago."

"So, does that mean you're a Starclan cat?" Frozenpaw looked at her in awe. She purred with amusement,

"Yes, I am a Starclan cat, and I am here to welcome you. This is Starclans' hunting ground." She waved her tail at the surrounding

land and Frozenpaw looked around with amazement. Then he glanced up at Brambleberry again with concern,

"are you here to take me to Starclan? Am I dying? I don't want to die!"

"Don't worry; you won't be joining us for a very long time little one. Follow me." She signaled with her tail to follow and she disappeared into the reeds once more. Frozenpaw bounded after her and saw faint paw marks where Brambleberry had just passed. He followed the trail until the reeds parted and he was standing in a clearing. Brambleberry was sitting patiently beside a pool of dark water and Frozenpaw padded over to her.

"Would you like to hunt?"

Frozenpaw nodded his head and sat beside the older cat and stared into the dark water. He glimpsed a flash of silver close to the surface and struck out his paw to scoop the fish into the air. He looked up as it rose and was blinded by the sun as he looked directly at it. After a few moments of black, he blinked his eyes open and shut trying to get his sight back. He quickly glanced around but Brambleberry had vanished. A cold wind blew through his fur and the sunny; green clearing started to freeze over with ice. Every reed and branch on every tree froze and snow collected on the ground. He gazed around the clearing with wide eyes as the forms of cats trudging through the snow then collapsing of exhaustion filled the glade. He peered down at the fish he had caught lying beside him as it froze over. The pool started to freeze and it turned to ice. The wails of cats rang through the clearing in hunger and suffering and Frozenpaw trembled. *What's happening?*

An ominous voice rang above the howling wind,

" You're flames are the only way out of a frozen future. Four will become one to face the evil that lurks in the blizzard."

The wind picked up and the snow grew heavier. The howling of the wind deafened Frozenpaw and he staggered on his paws. Snow whirled around him and a blizzard grew, swirling and spiraling in the strong wind currents. The blizzard kept growing stronger and

heavier until all that Frozenpaw could see was white.

He woke up in his den with a start, gasping for breath. Rainpaw stirred beside him and glanced up,

"Could you not be so loud Frozenpaw? You just woke me up when I was just about to take a bite of that minnow." Rainpaw didn't wait for an answer and curled back up into a ball and was fast asleep. Frozenpaw found that he couldn't get back to sleep and hauled himself out of his nest and into the clearing. He mewed a greeting to Blackclaw who was on guard at the camp entrance and weaved between the reeds out of camp.

He started to race out of camp and dashed along the bank, reveling as the mud squelched between his paws. It was cool and damp. As he slowed down near the border of Riverclan territory facing a distant forest, he swore he heard a soft voice. It was like a cat 's yowl but it went on for what seemed like moons and he stopped to listen to the distant sound. He had never heard anything so amazing and mysterious. It was beautiful, yet frightening.

The wind tossed the fresh new leaves of oaks and birch trees as Fireheart lagged behind Whitestorm, Brightpaw and Darkstripe. The sun shone down on the hunting patrol as they headed towards Tallpines and the birds sang their sweet songs, celebrating the growing warmth. He padded along a rabbit trail but his thoughts travelled back to last night, he was positive that the cat standing on the high rock had been Frozenpaw. There was no other cat it could have been with a flame pelt and an icy gaze. But what did it mean that he was in Firehearts' dream? did that mean Fire would still save the clan? or all the clans?

"Fireheart!" Fireheart jumped as Darkstripe growled at him. " Keep up will you? stop slacking off!" He grumbled and trudged forward behind Brightpaw. Fireheart shook himself as if trying to shake the dream and his troubled thoughts out of his mind. Now was not the time to be worrying about the dream, he had to focus on hunting. As he followed Darkstripe, he noticed the pine trees towering over the patrol and realised whilst he was lost in thought they had arrived at Tallpines.

"The hunting here should be good, we haven't hunted in this part of the forest for a while," Whitestorm looked around, assessing good places to hunt, " Let's split up, Fireheart and Darkstripe, you can hunt closer to the tree-cut place and Brightpaw and I will hunt in the other direction," Darkstripe grumbled but plodded towards the tree-cut place. Fireheart followed and scented the air for prey. Whitestorm and Brightpaw trotted off into the pines and Fireheart lost sight of them, the sound of their footsteps smothered by the soft pine needles littering the ground.

The two toms padded silently through the tall pine trees as the sun climbed higher into the sky. When it had almost reached the highest point, Darkstripe signalled with his tail for Fireheart to stop. He peered through a small bramble bush and Fireheart noticed what he had spotted. Two brown pelted rabbits were scratching at the soft earth, too busy trying to dig out a new burrow to notice the two hunters. Fireheart signalled to Darkstripe to surround the bush and he nodded. He padded away and Fireheart dropped into a hunters crouch. As his muzzle brushed the scattering of fallen pine needles, he felt the sharp scent of pine tickle his nose and took all his effort not to sneeze. he focused back on the rabbits and saw that one had dissapeared into the newly dug hole whilst the other rabbit pawed dirt away from the entrance. he stalked closer, using as much cover as he could in the sparse undergrowth. This is how Shadowclan hunts, not us! He flicked his ear in annoyance but crept closer to the oblivious diggers. When he was a couple of tail lengths away, he glimpsed Darkstripe stalking closer on the opposite side of the brambles and caught his eye. He swivelled his ears forward, signalling for him to charge. Darkstripe understood and leapt from his crouch and towards the startled rabbits. The rabbit above ground darted straight into Firehearts paws and he killed it with a swift bite to the neck. The other rabbit hadn't even left the mouth of the burrow before Darkstripe had his jaws around it. Just as Darkstripe pulled his head out of the burrow, Fireheart scented Whitestorm and Brightpaw and a moment later they both materialized out of the trees.

"Nice catch!" Brightpaws eyes lit up when she saw the double catch they had made.

"Well done, we'd better head back to camp now," Whitestorm led the way back to camp, stopping to pick up the blackbird and two mice he and Brightpaw had caught. When they returned Fireheart, ripped off a leg from his rabbit then sat outside the warriors den. As he started tucking in to his meal, rustling from the warriors den behind him made him look up. Greystripe trudged out looking as if he hadn't had a wink of sleep all night. He stretched and yawned squeezing his eyes just then licked his lips. He noted Fireheart and mowed a greeting then trotted over to the fresh-kill pile and returned with one of Whitestorms mice.

"Mmmm, freshly caught mouse!" he licked his lips then took a huge bite into the mouse,

"Greystripe, you know it's already sunhigh..." Greystripe looked at Fireheart startled and almost dropped the bit of mouse he was chewing, "What! I knew I slept in but...oh mouse-dung! " Fireheart looked at his friend with amusement, "Well you look like you had a sleepless night,"

" I did," Greystripe grumbled, " I went to see Silverstream, oh, and I asked her about your kits!" Greystripe whispered. Firehearts ears pricked and he looked at his friend with excitement. It had been a bit awkward after he had told Greystripe about Mistyfoot but he soon accepted it just as Fireheart had accepted Silverstream. Fireheart felt a bit hypocritical after always telling Greystripe off for meeting secretly with Silverstream but even though Fireheart only saw Mistyfoot ate gatherings, now they were both in the same position. From then on, he had told Greystripe everything including Mistyfoot having kits and the encounter with Frozenpaw.

" What did she say?" Fireheart leaned closer to Greystripe and took another bite out of his rabbit,

"The other apprentice is a she-cat called Rainpaw who has a coat like Mistyfoot's. Both of them are extremely fast learners and are turning out to be very strong young cats! She said you should be proud," Fireheart was proud, very proud. *A son and a daughter! I wonder if Rainpaw has anything to do with Frozenpaws future? Is she part of a prophecy too?* He hadn't thought about his dream since the start of the patrol, he had been too busy to think about it but now,

as he and Greystripe sat close to the warriors den in silence, munching on their prey, he started pondering the dream again. If there was a prophecy, did that mean that danger was coming to the clan? He tried to think about things that might have to do with Riverclan and Thunderclan but he was stumped. He gulped down the last scraps of rabbit then hauled himself up off the ground. Come on Greystripe, let's go see what Tigerclaw needs us to do. Greystripe finnished his quick groom then hopped up and led the way to Tigerclaw.

Frozenpaw had been endlessly thinking about his dream and the eerie voice calling out last night. Leopardfur had been growling at him all morning in battle training for daydreaming and Frozenpaw felt embarrassed as the other apprentices laughed at him. He had n't been paying attention to the lesson and when Rainpaw pounced on him he wasn't ready and he was knocked off his paws. he growled at himself but he couldn't help but remember the snow and the leaf-bare that seemed to swallow the whole forest in white. Was that going to happen to the forest? Had Starclan sent him a prophecy? *But that's what medicine cats get, why would Starclan send me a prophecy? Why not Mudfur?* He shook his head. *It must have just been a dream. But why dream that? and did I dream that strange call as well?*

Everynight, he would have nightmares about ice, snow, blizzards, wailing cats and yellow eyes.

Fireheart and Mistyfoot Part 2

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